

We claim:

1. A method for evaluating the operation of a system relative to one or more policy goals, the method comprising:

providing a structured model for modeling the operation of the system, the structured model having a plurality of entities, each entity having one or more attributes and one or more relationships between the entities;

allowing a user to provide one or more policy goals, the one or more policy goals referencing, at least in part, one or more of the entities and/or attributes of the structured solution space; and

applying the one or more policy goals against the structured model to determine how well the system performed relative to the one or more policy goals.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the one or more policy goals have weights that indicate the relative importance of the policy goal.

3. A method according to claim 3 further comprising the step of aggregating the weights of the one or more policy goals to provide an aggregate policy goal metric.

4. A method according to claim 1 wherein selected policy goals define a functional expression referencing one or more of the entities, attributes, and/or relationships of the structured model.

5. A method according to claim 4 wherein the functional expression includes Boolean operators.

6. A method according to claim 4 wherein selected policy goals further include one or more functional parameters.

7. A method according to claim 6 wherein one or more of the functional parameters include weights.

8. A method according to claim 6 wherein one or more of the functional parameters include limits.

9. A method according to claim 1 wherein the selected policy goals are specified by a user via a user interface that provides a reference to one or more of the entities, attributes, and/or relationships of the structured model.

10. A method according to claim 9 wherein the user interface allows the user to define one or more policy goals referencing selected entities and/or attributes of the structured model.

11. A method according to claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
allowing a user to propose a change to the operation of the system;

applying the one or more policy goals to the structured model with the proposed change to determine how well the system performed relative to the one or more policy goals.

12. A method according to claim 11 wherein the one or more policy goals have weights that indicate the relative importance of the policy goal.

13. A method according to claim 12 further comprising the step of aggregating the weights of the one or more policy goals to provide an aggregate policy goal metric.

14. A method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of searching a historical database of past system performance to identify a historical change to the operation of the system that is similar to the proposed change.

15. A method according to claim 14 further comprising the step of applying the one or more policy goals to the structured model with the historical change to determine how well the system performed relative to the one or more policy goals.

16. A method according to claim 15 further comprising the step of identifying a historical change that causes the system to perform relatively well relative to the one or more policy goals.

17. A method for evaluating the operation of a process under a proposed change, the method comprising:

providing one or more policy goals;

proposing a change to the operation of the process;

applying the one or more policy goals to determine how well the process performs with the proposed change relative to the one or more policy goals; and

reporting how well the process performs with the proposed change relative to the one or more policy goals.

18. A method according to claim 17 wherein the reporting step reports which of the one or more policy goals was violated, if any.

19. A method for evaluating the operation of a process under a proposed change, the method comprising:

allowing a policy manager to provide one or more policy goals;

storing the one or more policy goals;

providing a structured solutions domain for the process;

proposing a change to the operation of the process;

applying the one or more policy goals to the structured solutions domain to determine how well the process performs with the proposed change relative to the one or more policy goals; and

reporting how well the process performs with the proposed change relative to the one or more policy goals.

20. A method according to claim 19 wherein the reporting step reports which of the one or more policy goals was violated, if any.

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